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Slice of farm life

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July 11, 2008

*Photo By State Journal/Kelly Mackey*

Eric Boyd, 7, right, his father, Billy Boyd, and Russell Givens listen at the metal recycling & dump cleanup hay-ride stop Thursday. Billy Boyd's father was a farmer, and although the Boyd family no longer farms, they live on 8 acres.

*Photo By State Journal/Kelly Mackey*

A sheep sticks its head out of the fence at the sheep husbandry stop on the Farm-City Field Day tour Thursday.

It's tough most anytime to get a consensus about anything, whether there are two or three " or two or three thousand " gathered.

Thursday's 50th edition of the Farm-City Field Day, however, was an exception.

Held on a Taylor Branch Road farm recently purchased by Noel and Susan Wise, all those interviewed agreed the planning led to a perfect location, the weather cooperated by providing a beautiful day, the stops were informative and the food and fellowship served to conclude the event on a cordial note.

"It's a special day for Susie and me," said Noel Wise. "It's a beautiful day and we're pleasantly surprised at the turnout."

I never could locate Franklin County Agriculture Agent Keenan Bishop in the throng, but I'm certain he would have agreed.

Many, in fact, were saying this was the best field day we've had in many, many years " and it's always interesting how particularly "veteran" field day goers take possession of the event they may have had little or nothing to do with beyond attending.

"You can't host a field day," Wise said, "without community involvement. And the community certainly came through today."

The Farm-City Field Day began in 1958 on a farm owned by James Smith in the Bridgeport area.

Whether by accident or intent, the farm chosen for this historic anniversary is in sight of the farm where that inaugural field day was held and was in the Smith family until the Wises purchased it a couple of years back.

The first of the five stops featured representatives of four generations of the Smith family



Help	talking about their ancestors.
Forms	"In 1958," said Ann Morse, daughter of the late James Smith, "there were 20 or 30 participants (at the first field day) and the snack afterwards consisted of watermelon."
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anniversary• Birth• Photo Reprint• Engagement• Wedding	<p>The dessert at the meal Thursday was a slice of watermelon.</p> <p>"Our family has always had a deep appreciation for the countryside," said Morse who still lives with her family on her father's farm.</p> <p>She mentioned the family cemetery on the farm.</p>
Ads by Google	<p>"Back when they started, farming was a lifetime commitment. They lived, worked and played on the farm and when they died they were buried in the family plot on the farm. There seemed to always be the idea that the farm would forever stay in the family."</p> <p>Troy Smith, who inherited the farm, said the Wises and their son Richard Hanley are hard-working farmers and he appreciated the work they've done since they purchased the 80-plus acre parcel.</p> <p>The second stop featured field day regular Tom Karsner talking about metal recycling and cleaning up dump sites on farms. Karsner is with the Franklin County Conservation District and says his agency is able to provide grant money for the Franklin County Road Department to conduct the cleanups.</p> <p>"Long before the days of countywide garbage pickup and recycling centers," Karsner said, "farmers had to have a place on the farm to dump worn out and broken equipment. Usually that was in a hollow or along a fencerow far from sight."</p> <p>While some might frown on the practice, Karsner said farmers had no choice " and this farm was no exception.</p> <p>"The Smiths put their junk equipment over there," he said, pointing to the foot of a hill. "The Wises took six dump truck loads out of here."</p> <p>He said the Wises funded that cleanup on their own, but emphasized the Conservation District and the Road Department stand ready to help.</p> <p>"Just contact our office in Lakeview Park," he said.</p> <p>At the third stop, former Pulaski County agriculture agent Keenan Turner, now with the University of Kentucky Master Grazier Program, talked about how farmers can rescue their farms and be able to stay on the farm by focusing their efforts on grazing rather than planting and harvesting crops like corn or hay.</p> <p>Turner said the double whammy of repeated drought and sky-high interest rates in the 1980s resulted in a disastrous decade for farming.</p> <p>"During that time I had friends who went bankrupt, some who lost their homes, farms and equipment, some whose families broke up " and some who even committed suicide because they just didn't know what to do," Turner said.</p> <p>That's when he started seeking alternatives to traditional farming which required lots of up-front money to purchase equipment, seed and fertilizer.</p> <p>"If they were allowed to keep their farms," he said, "when they started getting a little money they purchased cattle and just grazed the property instead of cutting and baling hay or cutting corn for silage."</p> <p>He said times are rough on a lot of farmers now, too, and those facing challenges might consider similar practices.</p> <p>"The bottom line is stay on the farm, graze the fields, buy what hay you need and don't cut your own and forget about equipment and baling. If you're interested in something like this on your farm, contact your county agent and he'll give me a call and I'll come up and take a look."</p> <p>Phillip Morgan began the fourth stop explaining about his sheep operation nearby on Bridgeport-Benson Road. He introduced his daughter, Karen Morgan, and Alli Higgs both of whom talked about particular aspects of raising sheep.</p> <p>Phillip Morgan talked about how the use of sheep for food and fiber declined after the 1950s because of increased pressure by predators and the rise in popularity of synthetic fibers.</p> <p>"But with good farming practices things are changing back now and there's a resurgence in their popularity." Morgan said they raise sheep to show, not for money.</p> <p>The wagon I was on bypassed the last stop on invasive weeds and went straight to the lunch provided by a host of sponsors and served by members and friends of the Bridgeport Ruritan Club.</p> <p>"It's tough to pull it all together," said Larry Hayden, president of the Bridgeport Ruritan Club, "but it's a great day."</p>

"This is really a nice thing," said local insurance agent Granville Coblin while standing in the long line waiting for lunch. "I've been to a lot of them and they're always interesting and you get to see a lot of nice people."

And I couldn't find a person who disagreed.



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